

The phonological system of the North Frisian dialects is strongly being influenced by Standard German and is slowly adapting to that of the German language. With a number of native speakers probably even less than 10,000 and decreasing use in mainland North Frisia, the North Frisian language is endangered. It is protected as a minority language and has become an official language in the Nordfriesland district and on Heligoland island.

External links

The closest relatives of North Frisian are the two other Frisian languages, the Saterland Frisian of north-western Lower Saxony, Germany, and the West Frisian language spoken in the northern

North Frisian	
Sylt: Nuurdfriisk Föhr/Amrum: nuurdfresk Heligoland: Noorfriisk Wiedingharde/Halligen: nordfreesk Mooring: nordfräsch Karrharde: nordfräisch Central Goesharde: noordfreesch	
	
Bilingual sign in German and North Frisian, respectively, in Husum, Germany	
Native to	Germany
Region	Schleswig-Holstein
Native speakers	(10,000 cited 1976) ^[1]
Language family	Indo-European - Germanic - West Germanic - North Sea Germanic - Anglo-Frisian - Frisian North Frisian
Official status	

Netherlands. Together, the three sub-groups form the group of Frisian languages.

English is also closely related to Frisian. The two languages are classified in a common Anglo-Frisian group, which is grouped among the Ingvaeonic languages, together with Low German. The related Low German has developed differently since Old Saxon times and has lost many Ingvaeonic characteristics.^[4]

Dialects

Overview

The North Frisian dialects can be grouped into two main dialectal divisions: mainland and insular dialects. Altogether, both groups have 10 dialects.^[5] The dialect spoken on the Halligen is one of the mainland dialects though. Typically, one distinguishes between the following 10 dialects, which have been spoken since the beginning of Frisian linguistic studies in the 19th century:

Insular North Frisian

- Sylt Frisian (Söl'ring)
- Föhr-Amrum Frisian (Fering, Öömrang)
- Heligolandic Frisian (Halunder)

Mainland North Frisian

- Wiedingharde Frisian
- Bökingharde Frisian (incl. Mooring)
- Karrharde Frisian
- Northern Goesharde Frisian
- Central Goesharde Frisian
- Southern Goesharde Frisian (extinct since early 1980s)
- Halligen Frisian

The mainland and insular dialects clearly differ from each other because they were shaped by Frisian immigrants in different centuries. The islands of Sylt, Föhr and Amrum were colonised in around AD 800, and the mainland was settled by Frisians in AD 1100.

Also are various influences of neighbouring languages on the dialects. On Sylt, Föhr and Amrum and in parts of the northern mainland, there is a strong Danish (South Jutlandic) influence, but on Heligoland and the rest of mainland North Frisia, the Low German influence is predominant. Moreover, there has historically been little exchange between the dialects and so hardly any lingua franca could develop and there was no cultural centre in North Frisia for which the dialect could have had a leading role.

Samples

Official language in	Nordfriesland Heligoland
Language codes	
ISO 639-2	frr (https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?code_ID=148)
ISO 639-3	frr
Glottolog	nort2626 (http://glottolog.org/resource/1anguoid/id/nort2626) ^[2]
Linguasphere	52-ACA-e (varieties: 52-ACA- <i>eea</i> to - <i>eak</i> & extinct - <i>eba</i> & - <i>ebb</i>)



North Frisian dialects

The sentence displayed below in many variants reads, "'Shine, old moon, shine!'", cried Häwelmann, but the moon was nowhere to be seen and the stars neither; they had all already gone to bed" (based on Theodor Storm's *Der kleine Häwelmann*).^[6]

Insular

Söl'ring (dialect of Sylt)

"Ljucht, ual Muun, ljucht!" skriilt Häwelmann, man di Muun wiar narigen tö sen en uk di Stiaren ek; ja wiar al altermaal tö Bēr gingen.

Fering-Öömrang (dialect of Föhr and Amrum)

"Locht, ual muun, locht!" rep Heewelmaan, man a muun wiar nochhuaren tu sen an a stäären uk ei; jo wiar al altermaal tu baad gingen.

Heligolandic (dialect of Helgoland)

"Lochte, ool Muun, lochte!" rüp Heäwelman, oawers de Muun wear naarni tu sin'n en uk de Steern ni; dja wear al allemoal tu Baad gingen.

Mainland

Northern Goesharde Frisian, Hoorninger Fräisch variety of Langenhorn

"Jocht, uule mounne, jocht!" biilked Hääwelmoon, ors e mounne waas nārngs to schüns än da steere ok ai; ja weern al aal to beede gingen.

Wiedingharde Frisian

"Ljocht, uuile moone, ljocht!" biilked Hääwelmuon, män e moone was näärgen to schüns än uk e steere ai; jä wörn al altomoale to beerd gingen.

Halligen Frisian (although it is spoken on the Halligen islands, it is linguistically grouped with the mainland dialects)

"Jaacht, uale mööne, jaacht!" bōlked Hääwelmoon, man de mööne woas näärgs to siinen än de steere uk ee; jä weern al altomaale to beed giangen.

Mooring (dialect of Bökingharde)

"Jucht, üülje mounne, jucht!" biiljked Hääwelmoon, ouers e mounne wus nargne tu schüns än e stääre uk ai; ja wjarn ål åltumååle tu beed lim.

Note that, despite the differences between the dialects, the Fering and Öömrang are highly similar; in this example nearly identical.

The following table further demonstrates the similarities and differences between the various dialects.^[7]



Linguistic map of Schleswig in the mid-19th century

Dialect	Father	Mother	Sister	Brother
<u>Söl'ring</u>	Faadër	Mooter	Sester	Bröder
<u>Fering</u>	aatj	mam	saster	bruler
<u>Öömrang</u>				bruder
<u>Hallig Frisian</u>	baabe	mäm	soster	bröör
<u>Halunder</u>	Foor	Mem	Söster	Bruur
<u>Wiedingharder Frisian</u>	tääte	määm		broor
<u>Karrharde Frisian</u>		mäm		brauder
<u>Bökingharde Frisian</u>	taatje	mam		brouder
<u>Central Goesharde Frisian</u>	ate	mäm		broor
<u>Southern Goesharder Frisian</u>	fåår, fååðer			brööðer
<u>Nordergoesharder Frisian</u>	fååje		soster	brår

Extinct dialects

The Eiderstedt Frisian on the Eiderstedt peninsula were abandoned in favour of Low German during the 17th and 18th centuries. In contrast to the northern hundreds, Eiderstedt was economically strong and wealthy and was oriented towards the southern, Low German parts of Schleswig-Holstein. Moreover, there was a strong Dutch immigration during the 16th century.^[8]

A similar situation was to be found on the island of Strand, which was destroyed during the Burchardi flood. The population of the eastern, remaining part of Strand, the modern Nordstrand, did not succeed in rebuilding the dikes on their own. Therefore, many Frisian speaking people left their homeland on Strand or were otherwise not able to maintain their native language against mostly Dutch-speaking immigrants. On Pellworm, the western remainder of Strand, the repair of the dikes was quickly accomplished and so the Frisian language was still spoken in the 18th century, until it also vanished due to changes in population structure. The old Strand Frisian was presumably closest to Halligen Frisian.

Likewise close to Halligen Frisian was the Wyk Frisian that used to be spoken in Wyk auf Föhr until the town completely shifted to Low German. The Wyk dialect is thought to have developed from the dialects of immigrants from the Halligen and Strand island.

The dialect that most recently died out is Southern Goesharde Frisian which became extinct with the death of its last speaker in the early 1980s. Other mainland dialects are also facing extinction.

North of the German-Danish border North Frisian was spoken only in some marsh-farms, located directly at the border.^[9]

Self-designation

Due to the large number of dialects there is no original native name for the North Frisian language as such. E.g. the Wiedingharde and Halligen Frisians call their language *freesk*, in the Bökingharde it is called *frasch*, and in the Goesharde likewise *fräisch* or *freesch*. While these names all translate to "Frisian" the native names of the insular dialects refer to the particular islands as in *Fering*, *Öömrang*, *Söl'ring* or *Halunder*. E.g. "Frisian" would mean "*fresk*" in the Föhr dialect.

The North Frisians eventually agreed upon the inter-dialectal name "*friisk*" which corresponds to the West Frisian native name "*frysk*". This designation is today mostly used when the North Frisian collectivity is addressed or in the names of official institutions such as Nordfriisk Instituut, Friisk Foriining or Friisk Gesäts. The northern section of the Interfrisian Council has however kept its name "Frasche Rädj" in the Mooring dialect.

Phonology

Consonants

		Labial	Alveolar		Post-alveolar	Dorsal	Glottal
			plain	pal.			
Stop	voiceless	p	t	tʲ		k	
	voiced	b	d	dʲ		g	
Fricative	voiceless	f	s		ʃ	x	h
	voiced	v	z				
Nasal		m	n	nʲ		ŋ	
Trill			r				
Approximant			l	lʲ		j	

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- The Föhr (Weesdring) dialect contrasts dental /t̪, d̪, s̪, z̪, n̪, ɭ̪/ with alveolar /t, d, s, z, n, l/.
- /z/ is replaced with a non-sibilant sound /ð/ in the Sylt dialect.

Vowels

	<u>Front</u>				<u>Central</u>	<u>Back</u>	
	<u>unrounded</u>		<u>rounded</u>			<u>short</u>	<u>long</u>
	<u>short</u>	<u>long</u>	<u>short</u>	<u>long</u>			
<u>Close</u>	<u>i</u>	<u>iː</u>		<u>yː</u>			<u>uː</u>
<u>Near-close</u>	<u>ɪ</u>		<u>ʏ</u>			<u>ʊ</u>	
<u>Close-mid</u>	<u>e</u>	<u>eː</u>		<u>øː</u>	<u>ə</u>		<u>oː</u>
<u>Open-mid</u>	<u>ɛ</u>	<u>ɛː</u>	<u>œ</u>	<u>œː</u>		<u>ɔ</u>	<u>ɔː</u>
<u>Open</u>		<u>aː</u>			<u>a</u>		<u>ɒː</u>

Diphthongs

	Front	Back
Close	ia	ua, ui
Mid	øi	ou
	ɛi œi	ɔi, ɔ̃i
Open	ai, ãi	au, ɒi

- One triphthong sound /uai/ only occurs in the Föhr dialect.
- /ia/ and /ua/ do not occur in the Bökingharde (mainland) dialect.
- /øi/ and /ɒ̃i/ only occur in the Föhr dialect.
- /ãi/, /œi/, /ɔ̃i/, and /ou/ only occur in the Bökingharde dialect.^[10]

Despite the strong differences among the North Frisian dialects, there are still some traits of phonology that are more or less common to all dialects. Among them is the lowering from [ɪ] to [a], which is mostly complete in the central dialects but is only at the stage [ɛ] or [ẽ] in the periphery. For example, the word "fish" translates to Mooring *fasch* and Fering-Öömrang *fask* but Söl'ring *fesk* (cf. Low German: *Fisch/Fisk*, Danish: *fisk*, German: *Fisch*, Dutch: *vis*).

The distribution of the lenition of the unvoiced plosives *p*, *t* and *k* is similar as they have become voiced plosives and partially even developed to fricatives in the central dialects. That can be demonstrated from the verb "to know": Mooring *waase*, Fering-Öömrang *wed*, Söl'ring *weet*, Halunder *wet* (cf. West Frisian *witte*, Low German *weten*, German *wissen*).

The North Frisian dialects differ from modern Standard German by a more diverse system of diphthongs and consonants. All of the dialects have an additional line of palatalizations, which is uncommon for a Germanic language. Until recently, an additional number of dental consonants that changed the meaning of a word occurred in the dialect of Föhr. In general, it can be noted that the insular dialects feature a relatively complicated consonantal system, but the mainland dialects have more diverse vowels.

Recently, the phonological system of the North Frisian dialects has been strongly influenced by Standard German and is slowly adapting to its system.^[10]

Current situation

Officially, the number of North Frisian speakers ranges from 8,000 to 10,000^[3] but linguists propose significantly lower numbers. In 2007, Århammar estimated a total of 5,000 speakers inside and 1,500 to 2,000 speakers outside North Frisia proper.^[5] Exact surveys do not exist.

North Frisian is an endangered language, as in most places, children no longer learn it. In UNESCO's *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*, North Frisian is classified as "severely endangered".^[11] Exceptions are a few villages on the islands of Föhr and Amrum and the Risum-Lindholm area. Especially in the western parts of Föhr, the language community is still relatively common.^[5] The number of speakers on Föhr and Amrum alone is estimated to around 3,500. The other dialects are, in fact, seriously endangered, like Karrharde Frisian, Central Goesharde and Halligen Frisian.

The elementary and grammar school on Amrum is called *Öömrang Skuul* and, among other subjects, focuses on teaching the local dialect. Fering is also taught in schools on Föhr and the *Risum Skole/Risem Schölj* in Risum-Lindholm on the mainland is a combined Danish-North Frisian elementary school.

All speakers of North Frisian are at least bilingual (North Frisian and Standard German). Many are trilingual (North Frisian, Standard German and Low German) and, especially along the Danish border, quadrilingualism used to be widespread (North Frisian, Standard German, Low German and South Jutlandic).

In Schleswig-Holstein, North Frisian is protected by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages as a minority language. On 24 December 2004 a state law became effective in Schleswig-Holstein that recognises the North Frisian language for official use in the Nordfriesland district and on Heligoland.^[12]

See also

- Frisian languages
- North Frisia
- Frisians
- Frisian Islands

References

General references

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12. "Gesetz zur Förderung des Friesischen im öffentlichen Raum" (<https://de.wikisource.org/wiki/Friesisch-Gesetz>). *Wikisource* (in German).

External links

- Nordfriisk Instituut (North Frisian Institute) (<http://www.nordfriiskinstituut.de>) homepage (mainly in German)
 - Friisk Foriining (Frisian Society) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20070304050019/http://friiske.de/my.php?page=2&language=ie>) homepage (in English)
 - Friisk Foriining (<https://web.archive.org/web/20070228081616/http://friiske.de/my.php?page=2&language=nf>) (in North Frisian)
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